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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

14 June 1984

ZAIRE: CAPABILITIES OF THE FRONT FOR THE NATIONAL
LIBERATION OF THE CONGO [redacted]

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Summary

Although the Angolan-based Front for the National Liberation of the Congo (FLNC) is relatively large--approximately 4,000 to 6,000 guerrillas [redacted]--it has been unwilling or unable to mount any significant operations into Zaire since its last major offensive in 1978. [redacted]

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[redacted] warning of large scale FLNC offensives reflect primarily, in our judgment, Zairian paranoia and wishful thinking by FLNC leaders. Nevertheless, FLNC probably is capable of carrying out occasional acts of urban terrorism and economic sabotage, and may attempt such attacks in the next several weeks in an effort to embarrass President Mobutu as he runs unopposed for re-election in July. [redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared [redacted] for the Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Department of State. It has been coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. Questions and comments are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Africa Division, ALA [redacted]
[redacted]

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Copy 12 of 30

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An Ineffective Force. . .

By all accounts, FLNC has been plagued since 1978 by desertions, poor recruitment, inadequate equipment, and ineffective leadership and organization. We attribute many of these problems to the inability of FLNC to attract significant support outside its Lunda ethnic stronghold in Shaba. In addition, since 1978 the organization has been riven with ideological fissures generated by its leaders' inability to agree on political or military tactics. As a result, for five years the organization has been unable to mount any significant operations in Zaire. [redacted]

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FLNC guerrillas have had to become increasingly active in the Angolan conflict as the MPLA regime's military situation has worsened and Luanda has exacted a higher price for the FLNC's sanctuary in Angola.

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[redacted] The organization also was forced to leave its primary bases in the Luao area and withdraw deeper into Angola. [redacted]

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Even if Luanda did not need FLNC guerrillas for its fight with UNITA, Luanda probably would be deterred from encouraging renewed FLNC thrusts into Zaire. We believe the Angolan government fears, probably correctly, that another attack on Shaba could provoke Mobutu to step up assistance to UNITA forces. While [redacted] Kinshasa continues to restrict direct material support to UNITA, we believe that Zairian aid includes intelligence support, the transit of personnel and equipment, and access to facilities for rest and training. [redacted]

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. . . That Could Be Revived

Despite FLNC's unimpressive showing over the last several years, we believe the group cannot be completely disregarded.

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[redacted] The US Embassy reports that the election, originally scheduled for November, was moved forward to July by Mobutu in an effort to shorten the time available for opposition mischief-making. [redacted]

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We believe the bombing attacks at the airport, the post office and the Voice of Zaire radio station in Kinshasa earlier this year, probably by a rival dissident group, may encourage FLNC to carry out similar attacks. [redacted]

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Outlook

[redacted] FLNC may be preparing for some sort of offensive, we do not believe it is capable of mounting large scale operations from Angola, Congo, Tanzania or Zambia. Moreover, we believe that the leaders of Zaire's neighboring states, despite their personal dislike for Mobutu, would be unwilling to become more actively involved in Zairian domestic affairs because of their vulnerability to retaliation.

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Nevertheless, we believe FLNC is capable of carrying out occasional acts of urban terrorism and economic sabotage, particularly in the economically crucial copper and cobalt production areas in Shaba province. Zairian security forces outside Kinshasa are poorly trained and ill equipped to handle such attacks. The US Embassy reports, however, that the elite Special Presidential Brigade and 31st Parachute Brigade in Kinshasa, composed mainly of soldiers from Mobutu's home region and trained by the Israelis and French, are probably capable of controlling most threats to order in the capital area. We concur with the Embassy's judgment that continued control of Kinshasa is the key to Mobutu's remaining in power and that disturbances in the hinterland pose a threat to Mobutu only if sustained.

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ALA/AF/C [redacted] (14 June 1984)

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